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CROP OUTLOOK FOR EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION

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Widespread rains in Europe between mid-May and mid-June improved the condition of winter-sown crops and gave spring-sown crops a good start, according to the monthly survey of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, U. S. Department of Agriculture. In the Soviet Union there was improvement also from needed rainfall.

Present indications are that the breadgrain output in Europe excluding the Soviet Union in 1949 will be about 5 percent below the 1948 level and more than 10 percent below the 1935-39 average. Given average weather conditions, the potato crop is also likely to be smaller than in 1948 when yields were unusually high. Coarse grain production is at present expected to show little change. Sugar beet acreage has increased, but sugar yields are unlikely to reach the high level of 1948. Olive oil and fruit production promises to be much larger than last year. The first hay crop was poor in many areas. However, recent rains benefited pastures and should increase later hay cuttings.

Over-all crop prospects at present point to a total output as high or higher than last year in Northern and Central Europe. The outlook in Western, Southern and Southeastern Europe, however, is not as good as a year ago. In Western Europe, grain acreage has just been maintained while potato acreage has declined, and the high yields of 1948 are not in prospect. In much of Southern and Southeastern Europe, rains came too late to repair most of the damage caused by the prolonged dry spell of last winter and spring.

In the Soviet Union, it appears that the acreage in crops is greater than in 1948, but still below prewar. Following a winter with scant snow cover, soil moisture appears to have continued deficient in some important regions until relieved by general rains in May and early June. With normal weather during the remainder of the growing period, some increase in grain output may be expected.

Crop conditions, by country, follow:

WESTERN EUROPE

United Kingdom: Ample and much needed rainfall occurred in late May and early June, relieving concern over winter-and spring-sown grains and vegetables which had begun to show the adverse effects of subnormal precipitation. Crop and pasture conditions are now generally good but less uniform and promising than a year ago at this time. Reduced acreage and probable yields point to a wheat crop considerably smaller than in 1948.

Ireland: Harvest prospects are promising at this time. Widespread heavy rains during the last two weeks of May saved threatened crops. Some root crop sowings were delayed. The first hay crop may be light but later heavy cuttings are possible. The wheat output will be well below last year's because of a sharp decrease in acreage sown.

The Netherlands: Crop and pasture conditions continue favorable with good general rains in late May. Wheat and barley prospects are equal to last year's while lodging of rye may reduce yields in many localities. Total breadgrain acreage is somewhat greater than last year, however, and a total breadgrain crop at least equal to that of last year is indicated. The outlook for tree fruits is reported excellent.

Belgium: The condition of grains and pastures is very good. An increase of about 10 percent in breadgrain acreage is reported and with normal weather conditions, a better-than-average crop may be harvested. Despite some frost damage to low apple and fruit trees in early May, the outlook for fruit is excellent and as large a crop as in 1947 may be expected.

France: Rainfall in May was much heavier than in preceding months. Crops benefited greatly from increased rainfall but growth was slowed to some extent by low temperatures. Winter wheat is in good condition in major producing regions, but the excellent yields of last year are not in prospect. An official French Crop Report indicates a decline of 8 to 10 percent in breadgrain production this year compared with last. Spring cereals are improved after more abundant rains. The appearance of potatoes is good but acreage is indicated to be 5 to 10 percent below 1948. Sugar beets generally are in satisfactory condition, oilseeds about average, and acreage under these crops has been expanded. First cuttings of hay are poor. Prospects for most fruits are well above average, especially for apples.

NORTHERN EUROPE

Denmark: Growing conditions continue excellent for both fall and spring sown crops. Pastures are fine. Spring work was completed under favorable conditions. With wheat and rye acreages larger than a year ago, an increase in the breadgrain crop is to be expected.

Sweden: Temperature and rainfall were above normal in May. Following recent rains moisture conditions are now believed satisfactory, and above normal crops are indicated. Abandonment of fall seeded crops was exceedingly low.

Norway: Spring work started May 1 and progressed favorably. Supplies of seeds and fertilizers are reported sufficient. Although the subsoil moisture at the beginning of spring planting was low, above normal rainfall in May was beneficial and crop conditions in mid-June were favorable.

CENTRAL EUROPE

Bizonal Germany: Heavy rains after the middle of May have materially improved the crop outlook in Western Germany. Fears of drought have been alleviated. The outlook for winter grains and rape is favorable. Spring work was accomplished under generally good conditions and spring grains and root crops have germinated well. Meadows and pastures are also promising. Present prospects for the 1949 breadgrain harvest point to some reduction in both area and yield, compared with 1948. Coarse grain, potato, sugar beet and oilseed acreages, on the other hand, are reported to have been increased.

Austria: Extensive steady rains in May have brought in prospect the best harvest since the end of the war. The condition of breadgrains is considered good to very good, the condition of coarse grains and potatoes good. Growth of sugar beets is very favorable. Meadows improved considerably in May, and the first hay cutting is expected to be larger than in 1948. The outlook for the fruit crop is promising.

Switzerland: The crop outlook for winter and spring grains is good, though there has been some lodging of rye. Potatoes and sugar beets are also reported in good condition. Growth of grass was luxuriant in May and hay making began. Fruit crop prospects are good to excellent.

Czechoslovakia: Indications of an excellent harvest have been confirmed by recent press reports from Czechoslovakia. The condition of grain, particularly winter wheat and rye, and of sugar beets is considerably better than at the same time last year. Hay and vegetable crops are also in very good condition. Potatoes are progressing well. The fruit crop is indicated as average.

Poland: Weather conditions in Poland continue favorable. Based on present prospects, crops larger than those of last year may be harvested.

SOUTHERN EUROPE

Portugal: Early returns from the wheat harvest, which began in early June, are reported to show better yields than had been expected. While the harvest of wheat and other grains is expected to be larger than last year, it will still be well below the prewar average. The forage and pasture situation continues critical. As a result cattle numbers may decline this summer.

Spain: While rain and cool weather in May relieved the situation somewhat, the field crop harvest will be poor this year. Due to abnormally dry weather during most of the growing period, the grain output may be down by one-fourth compared to 1948. Pasture conditions are rated poor to fair. First estimates for olive oil indicate that production, which was very small last year,

Italy: Crop prospects are now better than a year ago. Continued rains, especially abundant in Northern Italy, restored confidence in a good wheat harvest which will probably exceed last year's. Corn acreage is officially estimated about equal to that of 1948. Largely as a result of marketing and labor difficulties, rice acreage will be below last year's. The pulse crop is reported better than in any postwar year, and the tomato harvest may be better than prewar. Blossoming of olive trees was reported heavy and the fruit outlook in general is better than last spring.

SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Yugoslavia: General rains in the middle of May were beneficial to crops. Condition of winter grain crops was reported very good as of May 30. Weather favored planting of spring crops and early season prospects for corn are favorable.

Rumania: Rainfall in May relieved the long winter and spring drought but came too late to benefit materially the fall-sown crops. Extensive abandonment of winter wheat is reported but some of the lost acreage has been replaced by additional planting of corn. Good germination of spring crops and development in early growing stages appeared general throughout the country except possibly in Dobrudja and Moldavia. Prospects for a good fruit crop were still favorable in late May. The condition of pastures is indicated to be satisfactory and first cutting of legume hays was under way in late May.

Bulgaria: Generally good rains, except in the northeastern provinces, created favorable conditions for crop development and field work in the latter part of May. Soil moisture is still insufficient in northeastern and southeastern areas where the most serious drought occurred. In other parts of Bulgaria winter crops are in good condition but late. Spring planting of corn was nearing completion by May 25, when the early sowings of small grain were said to be in excellent condition.

Hungary: The spring sowing plan was almost completely fulfilled by May 20. May rains improved crop prospects and as of June 1, conditions point to a combined grain crop output somewhat better than last year. Sugar beet, potato and vegetable crops were off to a good start. A bumper fruit crop is still indicated.

Soviet Union: Indications are that further progress in the recovery of crop acreage toward prewar levels is being made in 1949. It is officially reported that goals for the sowing of grains, sugar beets, sunflower seed, cotton and a number of other crops, were reached or exceeded, despite unfavorable weather conditions during the early part of the planting season.

The acreage of spring and winter wheat, rye, corn, sugar beets, sunflower, cotton, flax for fiber, hemp, and forage crops was reported to have increased. The new seedings of grasses (tame hay) were substantially larger than last year.

Widespread rains during the latter part of May and early in June were beneficial to crops. However, moisture conditions may not be entirely satisfactory in some regions, due particularly to the lack of snow cover last winter. The critical period for crops is not yet over.

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